

Message Text

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S E C R E T AMMAN 3923

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, SY, UR

SUBJECT: TALK WITH KING - CONTACTS WITH ASAD

REF: AMMAN 3894

1. KING WAS IN TOUCH WITH ME IN LATE EVENING JULY 26. HE SAID THAT HE HAD SPOKEN WITH ASAD ON JULY 25 AND AGAIN IN AFTERNOON OF JULY 26. HE ALSO SAID THAT NEWS HE HAD TO PASS ON WAS SERIOUS AND THAT ASAD WAS CLEARLY STILL VERY MUCH WORRIED ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS FROM SOVIETS.

2. KING REPORTED THAT ASAD HAD TOLD HIM THAT SYRIANS HAD HARD INFORMATION THAT THERE WERE A NUMBER OF SHIPS CARRYING ARMS TO LEBANON TO THE PALESTINIANS AND LEFTISTS. HE SPECIFICALLY SAID THAT ASAD NOTED EGYPTIANS WERE VERY ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THESE ACTIVITIES. ASAD ALSO RECOUNTED SEVERAL INSTANCES WHICH SYRIANS KNEW ABOUT IN WHICH PALESTINIAN AND LIBYAN VOLUNTEERS WERE RETURNING TO LEBANON IN NUMBERS WHICH ASAD CONSIDERED SIGNIFICANT. AT THIS POINT I RECALLED FOR KING ARAFAT'S CALL SOME WEEKS AGO FOR VOLUNTEERS AND ESPECIALLY FOR ALL PALESTINIANS TO RETURN TO LEBANON TO FIGHT IN SUPPORT OF PLO. KING SAID HE WAS AWARE OF THESE ACTIVITIES, BUT NEVERTHELESS ASAD FELT THE SITUATION WAS DANGEROUS AND KING AGAIN NOTED THAT THERE WERE PARALLELS TO "ANGOLA".

3. WITH REGARD TO THE SOVIETS, KING SAID THAT ASAD DREW HIS ATTENTION TO LARGE SOVIET SHIP NOW IN PORT OF SIDON OR ANCHORED

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OFF THE PORT. KING INDICATED THAT ASAD SINGLED OUT FACT THAT THIS

SHIP'S PRESENCE WAS BUT A PART OF GENERALLY INCREASED SOVIET ACTIVITY IN THE AREA. HE NOTED THAT SYRIANS HAD INFORMATION THAT SHIP WAS DELIVERING LARGE QUANTITY OF ARMS AND AMMUNITION, INCLUDING HEAVY WEAPONS. KING WAS NOT SPECIFIC ABOUT WHAT CONSTITUTED HEAVY WEAPONS INVOLVED. ASAD, KING SAID, HAD TOLD HIM THAT SYRIANS HAD INTERCEPTED MESSAGE, PRESUMABLY FROM PLO, WHICH INDICATED SOVIET SHIP WAS BRINGING IN HEAVY WEAPONS AND WHICH QUERIED WHETHER THESE WEAPONS WERE DESTINED FOR PALESTINIANS ARE FOR GROUPS DIRECTLY SUBORDINATED TO SOVIETS.

4. KING SPECIFICALLY ASKED ME FOR CONFIRMATION OF WHETHER THE SOVIET SHIP WAS IN PORT OF SIDON.

5. KING ALSO SAID THAT HE WOULD BE SENDING HIS CHIEF OF INTELLIGENCE TO SYRIA TOMORROW. THE PURPOSE WOULD BE TO PROVIDE SYRIANS WITH BEST POSSIBLE JORDANIAN ASSESSMENT OF WHAT WAS GOING ON, INCLUDING SPECIFIC INFORMATION WHICH THE JORDANIANS HAD COLLECTED. KING SAID THAT HIS OWN PEOPLE WOULD THEN SEEK SYRIAN ASSESSMENT IN RETURN AND COMPARE THE TWO AND SEE IF A JOINT VIEW COULD BE REACHED. I SAID THAT OF COURSE WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN STAYING IN TOUCH WITH WHATEVER COULD BE PRODUCED BY JORDANIANS AND SYRIANS ON THIS SITUATION.

6. KING SEEMED IMPRESSED BY URGENCY OF HIS COMMUNICATIONS WITH ASAD AND BY ASAD'S APPARENT CONCERN OVER PRESENT COURSE OF DEVELOPMENTS, AND MOST PARTICULARLY BY INCREASING SIGNS OF ACTIVE SOVIET INTERFERENCE. I ASKED KING WHETHER ASAD HAD EVER INDICATED, OR WHETHER KING HAD PRIVATE INFORMATION ON A CHANGE IN SOVIET ARMS SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP TO SYRIA. KING SAID ANSWER TO BOTH POINTS WAS THAT HE HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY INFORMATION DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, THAT SOVIETS HAD CHANGED THIS PART OF THEIR POSTURE.

7. COMMENT: KING SEEMED SERIOUSLY ENOUGH CONCERNED ABOUT SITUATION TO SEEK PROVISION BY US TO HIM OF AN ASSESSMENT OF WHAT WAS GOING ON, PARTICULARLY IN THE AREA OF ARMS SUPPLY TO PALESTINIAN AND LEFTIST FORCES FROM SOVIET SOURCES.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: SINCE I HAD RELATIVELY LITTLE TIME TO
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SPEAK WITH KING THIS EVENING, WE ARRANGED TO MEET AGAIN TOMORROW AFTERNOON LOCAL TIME TO REVIEW THE SITUATION THEN. WHILE ALL OF THESE REPORTS SEEM SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT TO PIN DOWN OR CHARACTERIZE AS HARD INFORMATION, I WOULD APPRECIATE ANYTHING DEPARTMENT OR WASHINGTON INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES CAN PROVIDE BEFORE NOON LOCAL TIME JULY 27 FOR MY MEETING WITH KING. A LITTLE SOLID INFORMATION AT PRESENT TIME, PARTICULARLY ON SHIP IN SIDON, COULD ASSIST IN ASSURING KING THAT WE CONTINUE TO APPRECIATE HIS

HELP AND COOPERATION. SUCH INFORMATION MIGHT ALSO HELP TO
DISPELL SOME OF THE DOUBTS AND FEARS WHICH NOW SEEM TO DOMINATE
HIS OWN THINKING ABOUT LEBANON.
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